

Kess, Quinn

From: Brown, Steven J <brownsj@cdmsmith.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2013 9:18 AM
To: Kess, Quinn
Subject: SB 103

To whom it may concern:

I wish to submit my testimony in opposition to the proposed legislation, SB 103, which would require cyclists to ride single file at all times. I both live and work in New Haven, and I am a regular motorist and part-time cyclist. I do not believe that this law, which has been proposed in the name of safety, will offer any safety enhancements on our streets, and I believe it places an undue burden on cyclists to enhance the convenience of motorists, while providing no benefit to cyclists. This law may in some cases make cycling less safe, not more, by taking away cyclists' right to maneuver in mixed traffic in ways that maximize their security. Below I list several specific reasons for my opposition. I hope you will consider them, and I invite you contact me if you wish to discuss further.

1. While the legislation purports to make it safer for motorists to pass cyclists, it does not consider cyclists passing other cyclists. Would a cyclist that moves to the left to overtake another cyclist be in violation of the law?
2. Legislation already exists requiring cyclists to make reasonable accommodations for passing motorists, including riding single file when appropriate and safe. That law goes largely unenforced, and there is no reason to believe that the proposed legislation would be enforced any more effectively than existing legislation. Furthermore, if safety is our primary concern there is much more that can be done by officials to enforce numerous existing laws, applying to both motorists and cyclists, before we need to start passing new laws. Examples would include better enforcement of speed limits (motorists); the three foot law (motorists); red lights and stop signs (cyclists); and proper lighting (cyclists). Before we start passing additional laws that may have unintended consequences, let's focus on the laws we already have on the books, laws which are large uncontroversial and proven effective.
3. I do not believe that it is always in the best interest of cyclists to require them to allow maximum space for passing motorists. Motorists are often unable or unwilling to fully consider a cyclist's safety when making a decision to pass the cyclist. This is exacerbated by a roadway network that is, in most cases, not optimally designed to accommodate intermingling cyclists and motorists. A cyclist riding in mixed traffic does so with the understanding that their safety is their own responsibility, and as such they need to flexibility to act upon that responsibility without fear of running afoul of the law. Oftentimes this may mean taking an entire lane of traffic because there simply isn't enough space for motorists to safely pass. Similarly, cyclists riding in groups, two abreast, are significantly safer than a cyclist riding alone or even multiple cyclists riding single file.
4. I don't believe that there is a real safety hazard related to motorists moving into oncoming lanes and posing a risk of head-on collision. I am not aware of a single case of such a collision occurring under these circumstances in Connecticut. A motorist will exercise far greater caution when it comes to protecting their own safety than safeguarding the safety of others. Pursuant to that fact, I think it is crucial that the committee consider whether the goal of this bill is truly safety, or whether it is convenience for motorists. While I understand, and truly sympathize, with the convenience aspect, I think it would be reckless to pass legislation that places a higher premium on motorist convenience than on cyclist safety. I believe we must seek the middle ground, and I believe we already possess those tools under the existing legal framework.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I can be reached at 203-404-3343.

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Please note that my phone number has recently changed

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